<center>**Remarks**</center>

Status of the Application

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the rejections set forth in the Office Action mailed on May 22, 2003.

-   Claims1-3, and 5-25 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 (a)

Thus, claims 1-3, and 5-25 are pending in the current application.

The Claims

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1 and 14

Claims1 and 14 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 (a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,226,751 to *Arrow et al. (Arrow)* in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,809,331 to *Staats et al. (Staats)*. *Arrow* discloses a virtual private network used to couple other virtual private networks over a public network (*see* col. 3, ll. 8-45). The system selects entities coupled to a public data network to be included in a virtual private network (VPN) and assigns identifiers so that the members of the VPN may communicate with one another (*see* col. 3, ll. 12-20). In this way, **secure communications between members of virtual private networks may be achieved** (*see* col. 3, ll.35-37). As such, a processor is configured as a single virtual private network unit in order to control the operation of the operating system (*see* col. 9, ll. 36-40; Figure 7).

In contrast, the present invention discloses methods for defining a virtual domain in an electronic messanging system (*see* Specification, p. 2, ll. 4-5). As such, the present invention does not contemplate communications directed solely between members of a virtual private network as disclosed by *Arrow*. In particular, claim 1 explicitly requires, "A method for defining a virtual domain in an electronic messaging system, comprising: defining a virtual domain node corresponding to a real domain name server." *Arrow*, at FIG. 1 discloses a variety of VPN nodes connected to a public data network that facilitates secure communications between members of the VPN. Claim 1, in contrast, contemplates electronic messaging systems that promote communications between defined domains in or out of a public or private network. Further, the identification of clients in the VPN including the "name space ID" and "Master key ID of the

domain" that serve to identify the remote client disclosed in *Arrow* are elements that further isolate the VPN from the public data network (*see* col. 9, ll. 25-35) unlike the present invention that uses a virtual domain to facilitate communication with the actual domain through a virtual domain construct.

Still further, while *Staats* discloses techniques by which a hierarchical directory structure may be searched (*see* col. 1, l. 60 to col. 2, l. 10), *Staats* does not remedy the deficiencies of *Arrow*.

Therefore, for at least these reasons, Applicants submit that claim 1 is patentable over the cited art.

Claim 14 is a computer readable media claim containing substantially the same limitations as claim 1 and is therefore patentable over the cited art for at least the same reasons as stated for claim 1.

Claim 18

Claim 18 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 (a) as being unpatentable over *Arrow* in view of *Staats*.

As noted above *Arrow* discloses a virtual private network used to couple other virtual private networks over a public network (*see* col. 3, ll. 8-45). The system selects entities coupled to a public data network to be included in a virtual private network (VPN) and assigns identifiers so that the members of the VPN may communicate with one another (*see* col. 3, ll. 12-20). In this way, **secure communications between members of virtual private networks may be achieved** (*see* col. 3, ll.35-37). As such, a processor is configured as a single virtual private network unit in order to control the operation of the operating system (*see* col. 9, ll. 36-40; Figure 7).

In contrast, the present claim requires, "An electronic messaging system ... for transferring an incoming message between a sending subscriber and a receiving subscriber having an associated unique user name." Thus, as discussed above, Claim 18 contemplates electronic messaging systems that promote communications between defined domains in or out of a public network by transferring incoming messages between subscribers. Further, the identification of clients in the VPN including the "name space ID" and "Master key ID of the domain" that serve to identify the remote client disclosed in *Arrow* are elements that further isolate the VPN from the public data network (*see* col. 9, ll. 25-35) unlike the present invention

that facilitates communication through electronic messaging regardless of whether the network is private or public.

Therefore, for at least these reasons, Applicants submit that claim 18 is patentable over the cited art.

Claims 2-3, 5, 11-12,15-17, and 19-20

Claims 2-3, 5, 11-12,15-17, and 19-20 depend either directly or indirectly from independent claims 1, 14, and 18 and are therefore also allowable over the cited art for at least the reasons stated for claims 1, 14, and 18. Further, the dependent claims require additional elements that when considered in context of the claimed inventions further patentably distinguish the invention from the cited art. In particular, claims 2 and 15 require, "designated virtual domain administrator, a designated virtual domain postmaster, a state of the virtual domain, and a set of allowed services for the virtual domain" in the context of electronic messaging systems designed to facilitate communication between disparate networks. In contrast, Arrow, at FIG. 7 describes a VPN that is managed by an actual (not virtual) VPN processor (*see discussion of FIG. 7* col. 9, ll. 36-53).

Therefore, for at least these reasons, Applicants submit that claims 2-3, 5, 11-12,15-17, and 19-20 are patentable over the cited art.

Claims 6-10, 13, and 21-25

Claims 6-10, 13, and 21-25 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 (a) as being unpatentable over *Arrow* in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,366,950 to *Scheussler et al.* (*Scheussler*).

Claims 6-10, 13, and 21-25 depend either directly or indirectly from independent claims 1, 14, and 18 and are therefore also allowable over the cited art for at least the reasons stated for claims 1, 14, and 18. Applicants further note that the secondary reference, *Scheussler*, does not cure the deficiency in *Arrow* in that *Scheussler* does not teach facilitated communication through electronic messaging regardless of whether the network is private or public as required by claims 1, 14, and 18. Therefore, neither of the references, separately or in combination, discloses or suggests a virtual domain in an electronic messaging system.

Further, the dependent claims require additional elements that when considered in context of the claimed inventions further patentably distinguish the invention from the cited art. In particular, claims 8 and 17 require, "such that in a multi-domain environment the search operation is performed as if the user name was part of a flat name space." As such claims 8 and
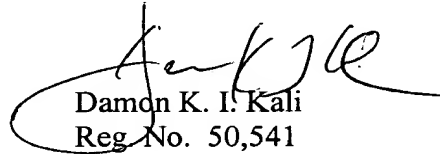
17 contemplate the use of the invention in "multi-domains" which functionally ties the electronic messaging system to domains whether the network is private or public.

Therefore, for at least these reasons, Applicants submit that claims 6-10, 13, and 21-25 are patentable over the cited art.

Applicants believe that all pending claims are allowable and respectfully requests a Notice of Allowance for this application from the Examiner. Should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, the undersigned can be reached at the telephone number set out below.

Respectfully submitted,

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